

Recollections of Keetley, Utah

by BERT FISHER = son of Donald Gail Fisher  
& Lavernia Virginia Hards "

I will preface my remarks with a statement of the source of these materials. I have no books to reference, no tapes or records to access and no source other than my memory. My recollections may not agree with those of my older brother, Neil. I don't suppose his is any better than mine, but, he was older when we were there so you have the benefit of a bit more maturity in his version.

I was born April 10, 1922 in my Uncle George A. Fisher's home in Heber City. This was at a time when the "Fisher Bros." were close and in a partnership which had not yet soured. Mom and Dad moved to the ranch in the late Fall of 1917 after their marriage in Myton, Utah where Dad had met and courted Mom. The old family home was in sad shape with cattle using the house. The young couple cleaned the old home and started collecting items to make it liveable. At that time there were only three buldings at Keetley, the old home, the old home immediately West of our home and the Barn.

Dad was an early automobile owner but never did master the machine. His interests were associated with ranching and the various animals that made up his busy life. I claim that Dad could count a herd of cattle while doing a wreckless 30 miles per hour. Someone once told me that the miracle was not the number of cattle, he would count the legs and divide by 4 to arrive at his count.

There was a boom atmosphere in the twenties and this led to the expansion and development of the old town. Dad sold meat, milk, eggs and other staples and delivered them to the boarding house at the Park Utah Mine which was one mile West of the Ranch House. He also provided staples to mines and businesses in Park City. Early in the twenties, Dad would use a wagon to haul his wares. Later, and in the period of my memory, he used a 1 ton Model T truck. There was a rough but useable road from the ranch through Deer Valley to Park City and this route was used when weather and road conditions permitted.

The genesis of Keetley developed rather rapidly, the farm buildings north of the old home just West of the Ranch house and the old Ice House and Slaughter House were in place at my earliest recollection. A line of houses facing East were across the Park Utah mine road from the old home West of the Ranch House. These were built to house miners when it became desireable to have the family nearby. There was an apartment house built in the late twenties with about 20 units. These had bathrooms, which made them vastly more desireable than the single homes. All the houses except ours, George A.'s and one occupied by Ford Fisher had two rooms and a bath. Walt O'Toole built a home East of the Highway with two bedrooms and a bath over a basement. In 1925 a Schoolhouse was built and used for a few years with two rooms for teaching. One had grades 1 thru 3, the other had grades 4 thru 6. The teachers were "Jack" and Elda Jackson, He taught the older class and Elda the younger. The forerunner for the new brick building was a one room wooden building which served for a number of years prior to my time. When the new building was built, the Jacksons moved into the old one room building and lived there until they closed the school.

Sometime during the twenties Dad built the "Blue Goose", a large low profile building divided down the middle into two large rooms. There were also rooms on the North end of the building for cooking and storage. This building was approximately 100 feet square. The West part of the building served as Pool Hall complete with a bar.

I was told by some of the oldtimers that the Blue Goose was a real wild place with the miners and some of the local families coming to the various activities. The West half of the building was a Pool Hall and Beer joint. I rather suspect that during the Prohibition days it was also used to dispense hard liquor. The East half of the building served as a Dance Hall, and at various times Wrestling Matches were held there. On Saturdays, Guy Coleman would come to the Ranch and show movies in the Dance Hall. His visits were not regular but did provide entertainment for a growing number of kids. The treat came when Guy could find someone to play the Piano during the movies.

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During the twenties Craig Fisher, Dad's brother, built Chicken coops on the hillside facing South, just East of the old Barn. This was a large building, probably 40 feet wide and 250 feet long and was filled with many Chickens. I don't recall how many but would guess there were several thousand. It was quite a production facility, with semi-automatic feeders and water sources and the lights were controlled by a wind up alarm clock which would turn the lights on during the night and increase production by lengthening the day. This production facility was in use several years before the depression and was among the casualties of the early thirties. When this venture became a liability, Craig moved to Daniels, South of Heber City and farmed until he retired. The coops were still standing when we moved from the Ranch in 1937 if my memory serves me.

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581 During the depression, most of the families who had lived in the houses and apartments stayed on after the mines closed. This was a very difficult time for Dad since he felt obligated to take care of these people. He had no source of income since his buyers were no longer in business. Most of the people would volunteer to help out with the work on the ranch but there were some that I remember vividly who remained in their homes and would not help or pay for the goods which were delivered to their places. One family ran up a milk bill of over \$400 for milk delivered at \$.20 per gallon. When the depression was over, this fellow was one of the first employed and was making good money. He never paid up.

Dad was forced to take a job and worked for the Government as a Cattle Inspector. This job took him over much of the State of Utah and kept him away from home much of the time. My older brother, Neil, graduated from Wasatch High School in 1936 and that fall entered Utah State Agricultural College (Now USU). When Dad was able to come back to the Ranch and quit his job, the partnership with George A. had soured. Mom was tired of the Ranch and the practice of George A. doling out money to the family and insisted on leaving. I remember this as a most difficult time for Dad, he had lived in the shadow of George A. for more than 20 years and didn't have confidence in his ability to shift for himself. We left the Ranch in May of 1937, moving to the present family home at 379 South 1st East, Heber City, Utah.

I hope these recollections will be of value to you in writing a history of one of the most peaceful places on this earth. I grew up during a time when tyrants were rattling their sabres and some of the World was in turmoil. Keetley maintained that peaceful stature. The Japanese invaded China in 1932 and though I recall the events from the "Weekly Reader", my peace was not disturbed. A runty paperhanger in Germany made his debut in the Weekly Reader at about the same time and to me it was no big deal. Years later, I ended up Island hopping to clean up the Japanese mess and ended up spending 25 years of my life in the Military.